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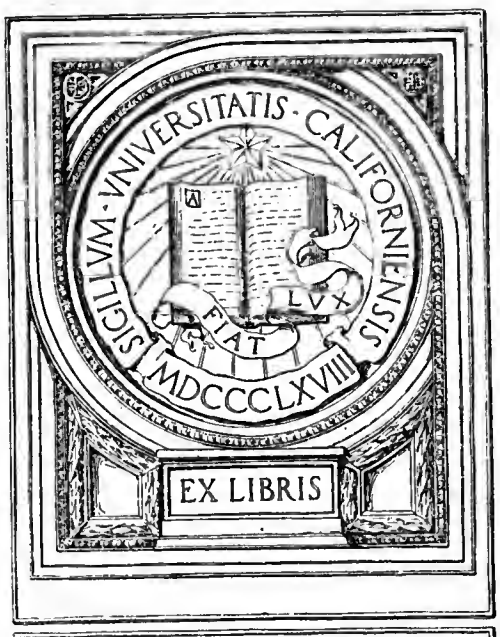
# The Four Seasons at the Lakes.

By Charles Dent Bell. M.A.
Rector of Cheltenham and Hon.ry Canon of Carlisle.

Illuminated
by
Blanche de Montmorency Conyers Morrell.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# THE FOUR SEASONS AT THE LAKES.

RYDAL FALLS

BY


## CHARLES DENT BELL, M.A.,

RECTOR OF CHELTENHAM

AND

HON. CANON OF CARLISLE

AUTHOR OF

VOICES FROM THE LAKES AND OTHER POEMS

ILLUMINATED BY

BLANCHE DE MONTMORENCY CONYERS MORRELL.



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# SPRING

The happy hills round Windermere
Look purple through the evening air;
The light falls soft on field and fell,
On rugged scar and wooded dell.

A leafy splendour crowns the scene,
The oak puts forth her tender green;
The branching pine stands dark and high,
Against the pale and solemn sky.

The fragrant thorn is flowered with May,
Whose snows rest thick on every spray;
And beech and birch-tree bending make
A mirror of the placid lake.

The noise of streams is in the ear,
And rapid Rotha murmurs near;
While birds from woods and copses dim
Chant loud and clear their evening hymn.

How mellow is the throstle's note!
What music swells the robin's throat!
And hark! from far the cuckoo's cry,
Borne on the breeze, comes wandering by.

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SEE how the tender opal light
Burns like a crown on Loughrigg's height;
While Fairfield's crest in shadow lies,
Veiled in empurpled mysteries!

O peaceful hours! O happy time!
O Spring, in all thy glorious prime!
I feel the spirit of the scene
Thrill me with pleasure pure and keen.

O GOD so great! O GOD so good!
To spread such wealth of lake and wood,
To pile the mountains, arch the sky,
How at Thy feet in praise I lie!

Father of mercies, I would see
Thy love in all, and all in Thee;
Proofs of Thy goodness and Thy grace,
Through sight and sound in every place.

And oft, when gazing o'er this land,
Decked by Thy kind and liberal hand,
I ask, in wonderment of bliss,
Was Eden's self so fair as this?"

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# Summer

There lies a hush on all the summer woods,
Unbroken save by pipe of joyous bird;
The air is still, and motionless the clouds—
So still, the rippling wheat is scarcely stirr'd.
How calm the scene! No bleating of the flocks
Comes from the meadow grass, or echoes from the rocks.

There was a sound of welcome rain last night,
Flowing from up the dale, and o'er the hills;
But now the storm has passed, and all is bright;
The becks are fuller, and a thousand rills
Rush foaming down the hollows in white streams,
Flashing from crag to crag with rainbow-coloured gleams.

Like diamonds shine the rain-drops in the sun,
Gemming each shimmering leaf, each spike of grass,
And sweet shy flowers that 'neath the hedgerows run,
To hide their loveliness from all who pass;
While honeysuckle and the golden broom
Scent all the fragrant air with rich perfume.

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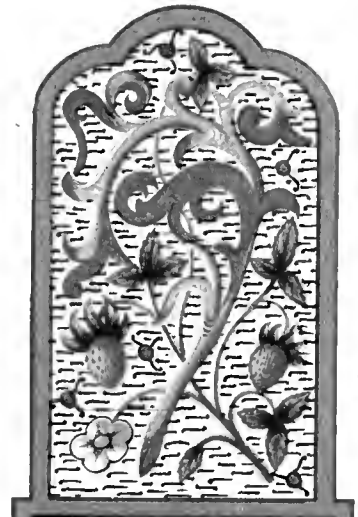
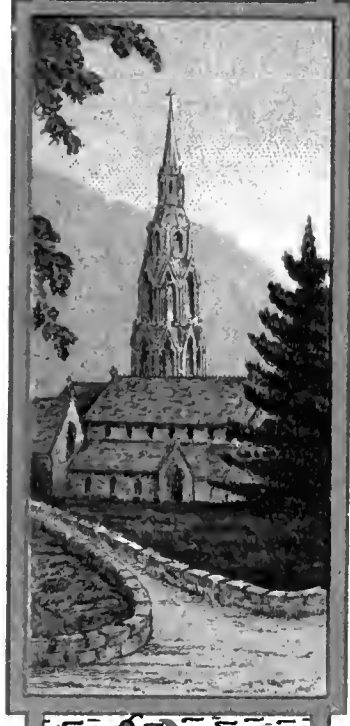


The tender shadows quickly come and go,
Climbing the hills, and creeping up the dell;
And all the valley is with light aglow,
And crowned with glory every rugged fell;
Sunshine is on the landscape far and wide,
Sparkles in every mere, and down the country side.

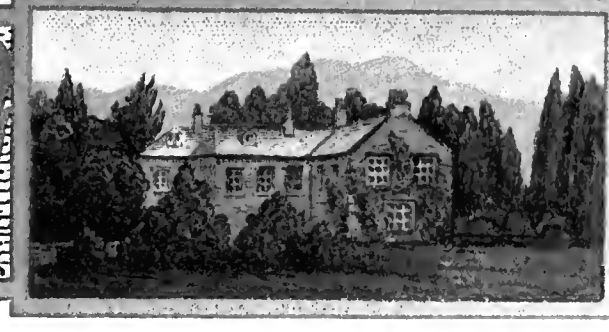
I know this land by heart, aye, every nook—
Each copse, each tarn, and every leafy dell:
Each brawling streamlet, and each tinkling brook—
I know it all by heart, and love it well.
Oft have I watched the daylight dawn, and pale,
And evening wrap the valley in her dusky veil.



Not far from hence you see the tall church spire,
Where sunbeams rest upon the house of prayer;
The blazoned windows burn as if on fire;
And, palpitating on the crystal air,
Fancy I can hear the chiming bell,
And distant dreamy music from the organ swell.

Wordsworth's dear mount is yonder, old and grey,
And guarded well by Fairfield's purple crest;
Walled in with laurel, and with fragrant bay,
A very Paradise of peace and rest,
With beauty all around, both far and near,
And, full in front, the queen of lakes, fair Windermere.

There in the valley—I can see it now—
Haunted by memories of the great and good,
Lies Arnold's favourite home, his sweet Fox-How,
Hid in a bower of shrubs and waving wood;
Far from the restless, troubled world withdrawn,
A poet's dream of river, garden, copse, and lawn.



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Without what beauty, and within what grace
Of cultured minds,—true "sweetness" and true "light!"
Him death had throned long since in his just place—
Man of the ample brain, keen, polished, bright;
But she lived still, the loving tender wife,
Helpmeet and Friend through all his grand heroic life.

Who can forget, that ever knew her well,
The rapid sympathies, the genial smile,
The wise, true words from gracious lips that fell,
Charming the listener, as she talked the while,
Now grave—now gay—now earnest with deep thought,
As truths of highest reach before her mind were brought.

All this is now a memory,—a sigh,—
Like other memories both sweet and sad;
How the years rob us as they hurry by,
Taking away so much that made us glad!
Yet leaving to us still so much that's bright,
Our path is not all dark,—at worst a chequered light.

Poorer that home, poorer the valley now;
For on a tomb is carved a pure white cross,
That tells to all who through the churchyard go,
Her everlasting gain and our sore loss.
Traced on the stone this record fronts the sight,—
Her meetness for the saints' inheritance in light."

What thrills me? Pain or bliss? O pain, to think
Of happy hours for ever past and flown!
O bliss, again to stand upon the brink
Of this dear fell, and muse of what is gone!
O pain, to ponder on the days now o'er!
O bliss, to feel this pleasure all my own once more!

Sweet pain, keen bliss,—I know not which is best,
The pain that fills my saddened eyes with tears,
The bliss that throbs through all my happy breast,
As here again I feel the joy of years!
I know not which I'd choose, or that, or this,—
The pain so bitter sweet, the sweet yet bitter bliss.

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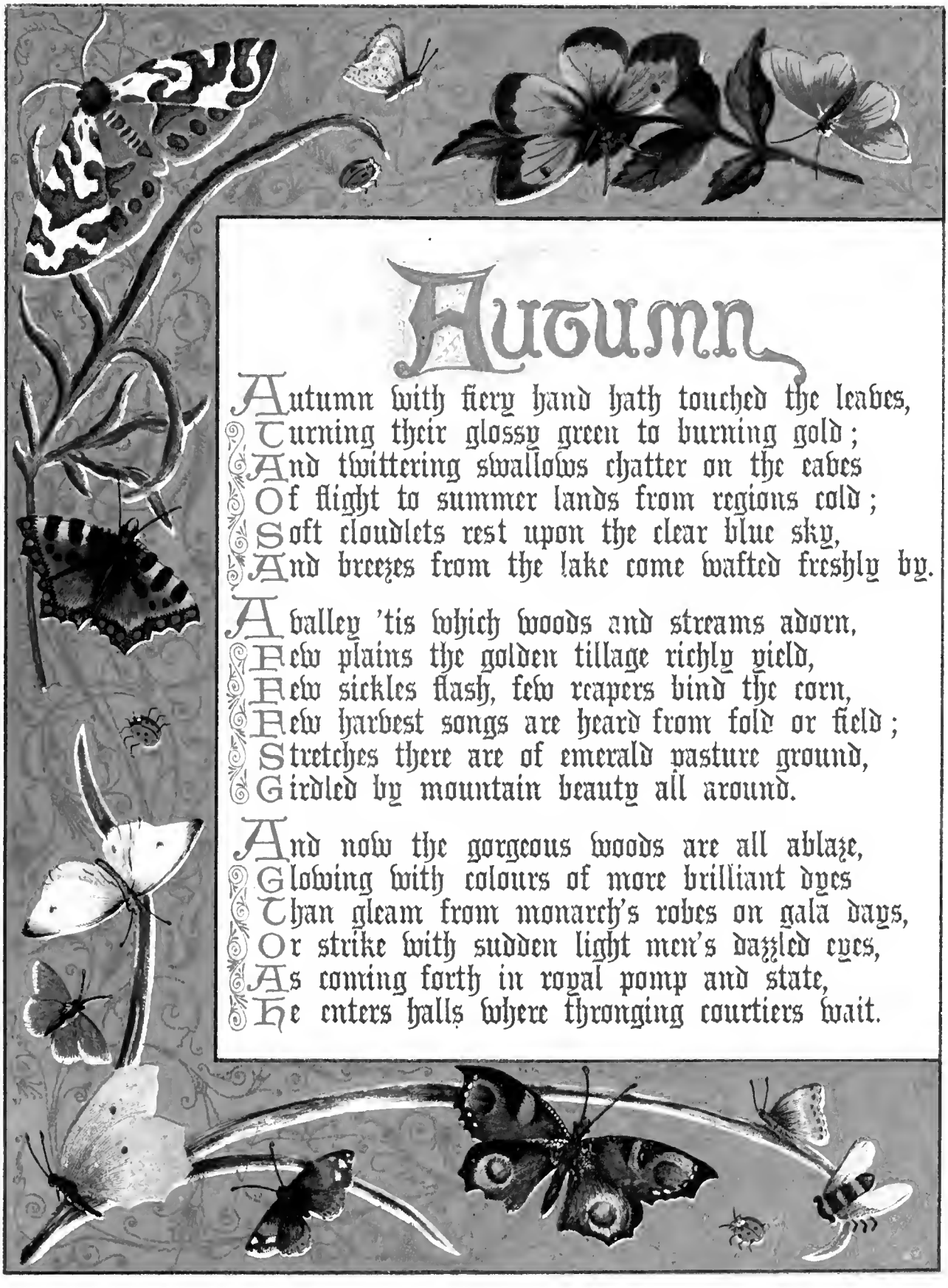

# Autumn

Autumn with fiery hand hath touched the leaves,
Turning their glossy green to burning gold;
And twittering swallows chatter on the eaves
Of flight to summer lands from regions cold;
Soft cloudlets rest upon the clear blue sky,
And breezes from the lake come wafted freshly by.

A valley 'tis which woods and streams adorn,
Few plains the golden tillage richly yield,
Few sickles flash, few reapers bind the corn,
Few harvest songs are heard from fold or field;
Stretches there are of emerald pasture ground,
Girdled by mountain beauty all around.

And now the gorgeous woods are all ablaze,
Glowing with colours of more brilliant dyes
Than gleam from monarch's robes on gala days,
Or strike with sudden light men's dazzled eyes,
As coming forth in royal pomp and state,
He enters halls where thronging courtiers wait.

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A golden lustre fills the wooing air,
And rock and scar all bathed in amber mist
Transfigured seem to shapes divinely fair,
Suffused with orange, rose, and amethyst,
Which o'er their hoary brows a radiance fling,
Bright as the iris on an angel's wing.

The mountains glow with ever-changing sheen,
That varies with the shifting gleams of light;
Here golden ferns, that rise 'midst mosses green,
Shake out their curling plumes on every height;
There fragrant heath, each bell a pendent gem,
Crowns the deep grass with purple diadem.

The balmy day is musical with sounds;
The plaintive robin's song, the caw of rooks,
The low of herds in far-off pasture grounds,
Whispers of leaves and noise of babbling brooks,
And rush of streams that flow in milk-white rills,
Down the blue hollows of the distant hills.

Autumn is in her young and lusty noon;
Nor fallen leaves, nor withered flowers betray,
That this proud pomp of splendour all too soon
Shall change, and fade, and pass into decay;
That Winter, with his cold and chilling breath,
Shall freeze this beauty all to icy death.

O Autumn days, that crowned the waning year,
And flushed the glowing hills with tender light;
O Suns, whose rising crimsoned every mere,
Whose setting fringed with gold the skirts of night;
How often have I stood,—as I do now,—
And watched your glories from this sloping brow.

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O days all fair, half sad, which to the mind
Bring memories of times for ever flown;
Of pleasures in the years so far behind,
And voices silent, and dear friends now gone;
I live a two-fold life within your light—
The past and present are at once in sight.

Ah me! how much I love this country fair!
The valley and the hills, both far and wide;
The quiet village builded here and there,
Part on the plain, part on the mountain side;
The houses stretching up to Stock Ghyll's Hall,
They were my happy pastoral charge, both one and all.

Dear Autumn days! What fruitless yearnings rise
That all the loved ones were with us again;
What tears unbidden spring up to the eyes,
To know such longings idle are and vain;—
That they who gladdened all the days of yore,
Shall look with us upon these scenes no more.

O happy Autumn! O bright halcyon days!
When earth lies basking in the golden light;
O mellow moons, that shine with softest rays,
Flooding with splendour all the solemn night;
Linger awhile; fain would we keep you here;
We would not part—not yet—with what we hold so dear.

It may not be. The happy year must wane,
And go the way of all things, bright and fair,
Of hopes that die never to live again—
Of pleasures numbered 'mongst the things that were—
Here all is change—upward we turn our sight;
Sun sets not there, nor Moons withdraw their light.

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# WINTER

Winter in this fair land has many moods;
At times the storms come roaring down the vale,
Across the mountains, through the sounding woods,
Or sweeping up the Ghylls with shudd'ring wail,
Shaking the red-stemmed pines that on the height
Spread out their gloomy branches dark as night.

Sometimes from stormy skies the rain-cloud breaks,
Swelling the torrents in their rocky bed,
Till streams grow rivers, rivers grow to lakes,
And boats might ply where once the reapers sped,
And the whole air is murm'rous with the sound
Of rushing waters foaming all around.

This noon there is a keenness in the air
Which stirs the blood and makes the pulse beat high,
And the whole scene is most divinely fair,
Lying beneath a pale but clear blue sky,
Which sheds a softened lustre o'er the plain,
And on the silent streams, each bound in glittering chain.

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White is the valley once so brightly green,
White all the mountain tops now crowned with snow,
Which glitter with a light intense and keen
When with the dawn the sky is all aglow,
The colour changing as the daylight grows,
From grey to purple, purple into rose.

The trees are stripped, yet are no longer bare,
Heathered with snow they stand up in the light
All motionless, and not a passing air
Stirs their pure bridal robe of spotless white,
While from each bough clear icicles hang down,
Like flashing diamonds in a monarch's crown.

Hair are these days so calm, so still, so bright,
Hair is each glassy lake, each hoary fell,
Hair are the falls that quiver in the light,
Hair is each ice-bound Tarn, each rocky Dell,
Hairer than all the night, with moon and star
Shining like crystals in the heavens afar.

And yet, though fair, the beauty 'tis of death,
For earth is covered with a snowy shroud,
Her requiem chanted by the wind's rude breath,
In tones now low and soft, now deep and loud,
And Nature lies all white upon her bier,
And clouds shed o'er her pall the sympathising tear.

Hopeless looks all as when the cruel words,
Ashes to ashes" o'er our loved are said,
Telling of cisterns broken, withered gourds,
Of bitter weeping for the newly dead,
And the grave closes o'er the lifeless clay,
And we go forth to front the world as best we may.

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No snow-drop lifts its bell above the ground,
No song of bird is heard amongst the trees,
No hint of summer in the sky is found,
No scent of spring gives fragrance to the breeze,
No sign of leaf on valley, copse, or hill;
And the whole earth is silent, cold, and still.

Yet there is hope, though all seems blank and dead;
There is a stirring at the roots of things,
A throbbing quick of life in Earth's deep bed,
A promise as of fair and joyous Springs;
And buds there are where blossoms folded lie,
Ready to burst in flower beneath the Summer sky.

Such hope, as when sad mourners go a-weeping,
And bearing to the grave the precious seed
With hearts that well nigh break for dear ones sleeping,
Yet trusting Him who is "the Life indeed;"
And able by His grace through tears to sing,
"Where is thy victory, O Grave; where, Death, thy sting?"

For soon the day shall dawn, and shadows fly,
Winter shall pass, and Spring again shall bloom,
Eternal Summer brighten all the sky,
And smile upon a world without a tomb,
Earth's resurrection shall with blessings come,
And usher in with songs GOD'S Harvest home.

Then He that comes to wake His saints shall say,
As round to each dear sleeper's bed He goes
To rouse them with a touch at break of day,
And all His heart with tender love o'erflows,
The morning breaks, the shadows flee away,
Arise, my Love, my Dove, and come with me away!

Winter is past, the rain is gone and o'er,
The song of birds fills all the happy land,
Flowers appear upon the Earth once more.
The Turtle-Dove is heard on every hand,
It is thy Bridegroom's voice to thee doth say,
Arise, my Love, my Dove, and come, oh, come away!'"

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# Skelwith Force

The warmth of a summer noon,
A sky translucent and bright,
On which there is sleeping a fleecy cloud,
Suffused with an amber light.

The beauty of valley and hill,
And a river murmuring near,
That tumbles and rolls over mosses and stones,
Limpid and cool and clear.

A meadow of emerald grass,
Sloping from up the dell,
Broidered all over with daisies white,
And gemmed with the blue harebell.

Stretching away to the west,
The Langdales rise on high,
Till the cloven crown of their soaring peaks
Is lost in the blue of the sky.

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Curvings of hills all round,
Fit frame for the picture fair;
And rock and scar most tenderly veiled
In a haze of bright golden air.

At the foot of the meadow green,
The rush of a foaming fall,
Whose waters dash downward from rock to rock,
Melodious and musical.

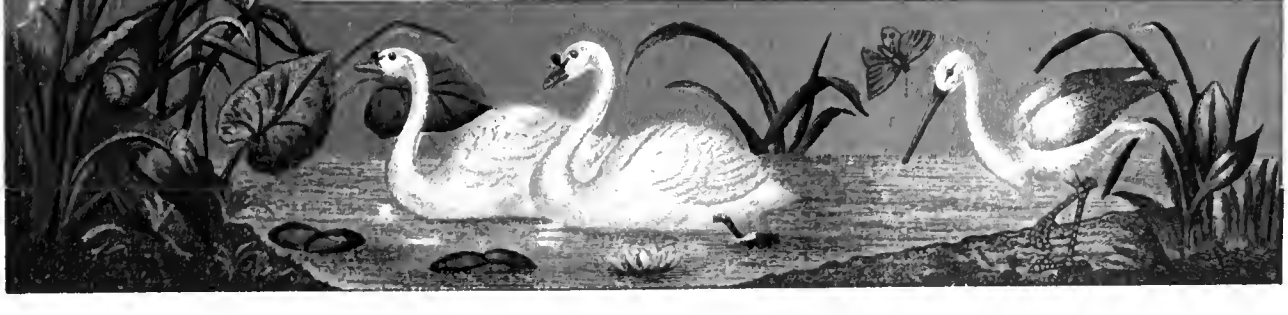
The gentle whisper of trees,—
Alder, and poplar, and pine;
With the flush of roses in every hedge,
Where the briar and loosestrife twine.

Sweet flowers on field and fell,
And plumed ferns everywhere;
The Oak, and Parsley, and Beech,
And dark-stemmed Maiden-hair.

'Tis a scene of pastoral peace,
Fair as a poet's dream;
With a glamour of beauty on all that you see,—
On copse, and wood, and stream.

'Tis said that the morning stars
Sang aloud at Creation's birth;
That the sons of God shouted for joy,
As He rounded this new-born earth.

And well may they sing on still,
Looking down on this radiant scene,
With its hills, and meadows, and woods,
And the river that flows between.



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And the song may flow thro' the night,
When the purple shadows fall;
And mingle its notes with the rush
Of the foaming waterfall.

Dear God! to lie 'neath the blue,
And muse on Thy wondrous love,
Is a pleasure, the sweetest on earth.—
A joy as of Eden above.

For the very gates of Thy heaven
Seem to open before the gaze;
And the soul is lifted out of itself
In a rapture of bliss and praise.

In a rapture of praise and bliss,
Which stirs the pulses like wine,
To a passion of keenest delight,
That borders upon the divine.

Oh! 'tis well to come hither and muse,
For the world intrudeth not here;
Nature herself is all in all,
And God and the angels are near.

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He gives us all things to enjoy,
"All things richly to enjoy"
Finis
The world we bring not with us here; we leave
Behind its stormy passions and its strife,
All that compels the noble mind to grieve,
The trifles and the meannesses of life;
For in this spot where God is all in all
The world appears immeasurably small.

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